

Proclamation 6949 of October 29, 1996

## National American Indian Heritage Month, 1996

*By the President of the United States of America*  
*A Proclamation*

Throughout our history, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have been an integral part of the American character. Against the odds, America's first peoples have endured, and they remain a vital cultural, political, social, and moral presence. Tribal America has brought to this great country certain values and ideas that have become ingrained in the American spirit: the knowledge that humans can thrive and prosper without destroying the natural environment; the understanding that people from very different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and traditions can come together to build a great country; and the awareness that diversity can be a source of strength rather than division.

As we celebrate American Indian Heritage Month this year, we take note of the injustices that have been suffered by American Indian people. Even today, few enjoy the full bounty of America's prosperity. But even as we look to the past, we must also look to the future. Along with other Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives will face new challenges in the coming century. We can ill afford to leave any of our people behind. Tribal America must figure as prominently in our future as it has in our past.

Let us rededicate ourselves to the principle that all Americans have the tools to make the most of their God-given potential. For Indian tribes and tribal members, this means that the authority of tribal governments must be accorded the respect and support to which they are entitled under the law. It means that American Indian children and youth must be provided a solid education and the opportunity to go on to college. It means that more must be done to stimulate tribal economies, create jobs, and increase economic opportunities.

Our bridge to the 21st century will rest upon the foundation we build today. We must teach our children about our past—both the good and the bad—so that they may learn from our successes and mistakes. We must provide our children with the knowledge and skills to permit them to surpass our own achievements and create a stronger, more united American community. We must provide them greater opportunity. It was the Iroquois who taught that in every deliberation we should consider the impact of our decisions on the next 7 generations.

In recognition of the important contributions of American Indian and Alaska Native peoples to our country and in light of the special legal relationship between the tribes and the Government of the United States, and obligations pursuant thereto, we celebrate National American Indian Heritage Month.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 1996 as National American Indian Heritage Month. I urge all Americans, as well as their elected representatives at the Federal, State, local, and tribal levels,

to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6950 of October 31, 1996

### Veterans Day, 1996

*By the President of the United States of America*

*A Proclamation*

This Veterans Day, Americans enjoy the fruits of peace, freedom, and prosperity in a world where too many must still struggle to live their lives free from conflict, violence, and repression.

As leaders in the fight for liberty, we have sought to advance the cause of freedom and democracy to people all over the world. The credit for our own freedom, as well as our continued security, belongs overwhelmingly to the men and women who have served in our Nation's Armed Forces—our veterans. Had they not been there yesterday, were they not with us today, our world would be far different.

Today we salute their service, honor their sacrifice, thank them for supporting this Nation in every hour of need. And we acknowledge that freedom's cost continues long after the guns fall silent. Many of our veterans bear the disabilities and scars of military service. The families of others—who never returned from their service—live always with a profound sense of loss. It is our duty to remember what our veterans have done and to uphold our commitments to them and their families.

As we mark the past achievements of our veterans, let us remember that they are a vital part of our present and future. Of the 40 million who have served in America's military since the Revolutionary War, 26.5 million are with us today—not distant historical footnotes, but as close as a father or mother, brother or sister, grandfather or grandmother, friend or neighbor.

Their tradition of service extends beyond the battlefield and the barracks. Most veterans in civilian life continue devoting their energies to the service of their country and communities. They are civic-minded role models who challenge and inspire our young people. They are volunteers who work for neighbors in need. They represent what is best in the American spirit.

That is why we must help them make the transition from military to civilian careers and empower them with the opportunities to use their training, discipline, and motivation in good and rewarding jobs. We owe them as well a guarantee that we will continue to defend the American ideals for which they have served and sacrificed. As the strongest force for peace and freedom in the world, we recognize our responsibility to maintain a military capability second to none.